



# **DEMOCRACY UNDER REVISION**



# DEMOCRACY UNDER REVISION

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A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE SORBONNE  
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IN the face of this audience, in the presence of so many distinguished men and women, I feel in a very apologetic state to-night.

I am not accustomed to make public addresses. I am not used to being entertained in this flattering fashion. But the invitation I received to come here was so tactfully and charmingly conveyed, and did me so much honour, that I could scarcely do otherwise than obey and come.

I come, if you will permit me to say so, less for the great compliment that your attention does me personally than because this gives me an opportunity of saluting France, the custodian of the world's artistic conscience,

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the exponent of intellectual freedom, the mighty mother of valiant and liberal thought for all mankind. The name of the Sorbonne is a very magical name to every intellectual worker, and I do not disguise from myself that to speak here to-night is the highest distinction that is ever likely to fall to me.

You receive me to-night as a man of letters. And as a man of letters I know I am not very easy to define. I am something of a romancer, something of a novelist, something of a publicist. I have written essays and social speculations. I have stolen and dressed myself up in the plumage of the historian. I have written schoolbooks and a scientific handbook. For my own part I fall back upon *Journalist* as the least misleading description of my use in the world.

But let me disabuse your minds of any idea that it is out of modesty or as a pose of modesty that I call myself a Journalist and my very miscellaneous mass of work Journalism, and that I am conceding a superiority in kind and quality, as an iron pot might con-

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cede a superiority to a porcelain vessel, to the novelist, the romancer, the social philosopher or the political essayist. I am not doing that. I am not raising that sort of issue. I am not thinking of rank and order and precedence. What I am doing is trying to express, in as bright and hard a manner as possible, a very definite view of the value of all literary effort, all literary and artistic effort. I am trying to express, in so far as my own activities go, my sense of the temporary nature, the transitory and personal nature, of every statement made by science and philosophy and of every beauty revealed by art.

If I find any difference between my mind and the minds of most of the people I meet, it is that my perception of time is rather more detached than is usual from the dimensions of the individual life; that my mind is, as it were, a small-scale map of wide range; that I think with less detail and in longer stretches; that the race process as a whole has come home to me with unusual vividness, and that future things and our relationship

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to future things have an abnormal reality for me. And consequently it is natural for me to think that the man of letters, the artist, the scientific worker and the philosopher live first and foremost for their own time and for the times immediately following their own, and that thereafter their real value diminishes.

Tradition and educational pressure may mask this process to a certain extent, but only mask it. We belong to our own times and have significance only in relation to our own times. And this is as true of those we call ‘Immortals,’ of Homer, of Shakespeare, of Michael Angelo or Leonardo or Voltaire, in the measure of their scale, as it is of you and me who are thinking and discussing here to-night. Great or little, we work, we serve our purpose, we pass. Into the night or into the museum of antiquities at last go one and all. Art, poesy, philosophy, literature, are not permanent things. They change in their methods, their function, their essential nature. . . .

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And when I say that, I do not belittle them, but glorify them. They are living processes like ourselves who breed and pass, and not dead things like crystals or cut gems to be treasured for ever in the vaults of the classical temple. All of them but the mere bric-à-brac I would sweep into one living mortality as Journalism in its widest sense. The picture, the music, the book, the research that does not arise out of actual current things—and does not bear upon what we are doing or what we intend to do—does not in reality exist. It is a phantom. It is a pretension. It is Nothing. Science, art, literature, philosophy, all alike record Humanity's impression of the present and its attempt to adjust itself for a future. They express the thought and embody the will—the growing changing thought, the developing will—of mankind. They are not a beautiful excrescence upon human life; not mere pearls secreted by the effort and suffering of mankind; they are the very core of the life of mankind—its chief directive function.

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Now after this much of self-introduction, I will put before you certain speculations that occupy me very much. I put them before you not as something thought out and presented to you in a finished state, but as something about which I find myself greatly exercised—something that may evoke kindred operations going on in your minds also, and so interest you this evening.

I propose to launch a generalization, a generalization about the probable forms of expression prevalent now and in the immediate future—expression in political, social, literary and artistic life. I am going to suggest that we are in the beginning of an age whose broad characteristics may be conveyed some day by calling it *The Age of Democracy under Revision*. That title I have chosen by way of defining its relation to the age which has been drawing to its close under our eyes: *the Age of Democracy Ascendent*.

Let us begin by exploring common ground. It would be easy to find quite a large number of intelligent and well-instructed people who

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would agree that the sixteenth century saw the germination, the seventeenth and the eighteenth the birth struggles, the nineteenth the rise and prevalence of something called Modern Democracy. Something not merely political, but social, and profoundly differentiating the literature and art of this time—quite as much as the political life—from those of any previous period. That Ascendancy of Democracy has culminated; and like some wave that breaks upon a beach, its end follows close upon its culmination.

Now what do we mean by this word Democracy? We are apt to say that such words as Democracy and Socialism may mean anything or nothing. But the truth is, that in spite of many variations and convolutions, both these words retain very definite meanings indeed. One might compare them to little bags given to a multitude of children to collect anything they liked from a pebble beach. In such bags, you might find at the end of the day a great variety of things; in no two bags would you find exactly the same

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things, and yet for all that in nearly all the bags would you find very much the same content.

I suppose we should, nearly all of us, be in agreement that what we meant by Democracy—in the modern sense—was expressed morally by the statement:

*All human beings are of equal value in  
the sight of God;*

or legally:

*All men are equal before the law;*  
or practically:

*One man's money is as good as another's.*

This implies a repudiation of caste, of inherent rank and function, of all privileges and all fixed subordinations. It is equalitarian or rebellious. And it is mildly paradoxical in the fact that, by insisting upon the importance of *all* individualities, it tends to restrain the exaltation of particular individuals, and by exalting all individuals to an equal level, it subordinates all individuals to the mass.

The democratic idea is no doubt very

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deeply rooted in the competitive and insurgent heart of man. It is implicit in Christianity and in Islam. But it was only in the sixteenth century, with the progressive decay of Feudalism, that it began to be effective in the literary, political and artistic expression of mankind. If you reflect, I think you will agree that its appearance was everywhere associated with the breakdown of outworn or outpaced systems, with processes of release and liberation, and generally also with processes of disintegration. Democracy to many minds will also involve the challenging and repudiation of authority. Some Catholic Democrats may question that, but I believe I shall have the general feeling with me in accepting that relaxation also as an aspect of Democracy.

Now as Democracy became ascendent in our world, its spirit produced new forms in political life, in literature, in art, in music. Let us consider these distinctive forms.

In politics it produced government by elected representative assemblies—elected by

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an ever-widening constituency of voters. We have Chambers of Representatives, Parliaments, spread throughout the world, and we have seen the franchise extend until manhood, and at last womanhood suffrage seems everywhere in sight. It is strange to us nowadays to imagine a fully organized country without a constitution, a parliament and periodic appeals to the mass of voters to endorse an elected government periodically replaceable. Yet six hundred years ago such a way of managing public affairs would have seemed fantastic. The Ancient World knew nothing of such devices. There were assemblies then, but not representative assemblies. The Greek democracies and Republican Rome assembled all their citizens. Even countries like France and England before the sixteenth century, which had parliaments of a sort, did not conceive of them for a moment as governing bodies and kept the elected element in a minor position. I doubt if many of us fully realize the significance of the fact that the current political methods

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and assumptions of the world to-day, prevalent from China to Peru, would have been almost inconceivable even to highly intelligent human beings until twelve or fifteen generations ago.

So much for the political expression of Democracy. In literature the democratic spirit found its natural vehicle in the Novel. That too was new and distinctive. The tale, the story of adventures, mankind has had always—most usually of kings, princes and heroic leaders—but it was only with the ascent of Democracy that stories of characters, histories of common individual lives detached from politics, detached from any sense of social function, getting loose from any subordination or any responsibility, rose towards dominance in literature. At the very outset of the ascent of Democracy came the great master Cervantes with his *Don Quixote*, scoffing at aristocracy, scoffing at privileged responsibility, mocking at the final futility of chivalrous mastery, putting his wisest words into the mouth of a clown and

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letting the flour mills of the common bread-eater overthrow his knight in armour. As modern Democracy rose to its climax, the novel rose to its climax. The common characteristics of almost all the great novels of the nineteenth century and up to our own time, is that they represent great crowds of individuals who follow trades, professions and so forth, and who have either no public function or, if they have a public function, are not so differentiated by it that it is of any serious importance to the story and the values of the novel. The crowd of individuals and its interplay has become everything. Great ideas that bind people together into any form of collective life are disregarded. Great religious ideas, great political ideas and developments are not there in any living, fermenting, debatable form—are even challenged and forbidden by the critics as having no place there. Consider Balzac, Dickens, Tourguenieff, Zola, and suchlike representative giants of this closing age. You think at once of a picture of humanity like a

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market-place, like a fair, like the high-road to anywhere on a busy day. When political life appears, it appears just as any other sort of life. Here is a novel about elections and their humours, and here is one about peasants or fishermen. Just different scenery and costumes for the common story.

It strikes one at first as paradoxical that a period in which the exaltation of the individual has tended to make everyone a voter, a fractional sovereign of the whole world, should lead in the literary expression of the time to the disappearance, so to speak, of the whole world in a crowd of people. But the paradox involves no real inconsistency. What is everybody's business is nobody's business. The literature of the period of Democracy ascendent displays what its political developments mask only very thinly—that Modern Democracy is not a permanent form of political and social life, but a phase of immense dissolution.

I think it would be comparatively easy to call the drama of the last three centuries

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to confirm the evidence of the novel. With the beginning of the period under consideration the Miracle Play which gave you Everyman and related him to God and Heaven and Hell gave place to Falstaff and his jolly companions, to the jealousy of Othello and the social aspirations of Monsieur Jourdain. If we turn to painting or to music we find all over this period the same effect of release—if you like—detachment, anyhow, from broad constructive conceptions and any sort of synthesis. There was very little detached painting in the old world. It was a part of something else. It decorated a building, it subserved a religious or political as well as a decorative purpose. If paintings were ever detachable, it was that they might be carried from a studio to an altar or a palace elsewhere. But with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries painting became more and more liberated, said goodbye to the altarpiece and the palace and set out upon a life of its own. Now our painters are pure anarchists. They paint what pleases them for

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the sake of painting. They paint with a total disregard of any collective reality, and they are extremely offended when we build our houses with insufficient accommodation for their bright irrelevant observations upon the beauty of this and that.

So too music has broken loose. In the old world it was relevant and generally subordinate. I can imagine nothing more astonishing to a revenant from the ancient to our present world—not even a general election!—than a visit to a large concert-hall during the performance, let us say, of Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* or Ravel's *Septette*,—this gathering of fortuitous people with no common function, to listen to music which, apart from its beauty, has no sort of collective meaning, no social object at all.

So far I have been attempting to make a case for the assertion that a consideration of the chief forms of human expression during the past age, enables us to see in all of them Democracy as a great process of loosening of bonds and general disintegration. But that

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loosening and disintegration were not universal. Now I would point out that in certain fields synthesis is so necessary, so inherent, that it has put up a very successful fight against the solvent tendencies of Democracy.

In certain fields the ascent of Democracy has not meant dissolution. No doubt the whole world of modern science became possible, and could only become possible, through the immense mental releases of ascendent Democracy. But while in the realms of political, literary and artistic expression Democracy meant fragmentation and reduction to unorganized masses, in this newer world of science the onset of Democracy was accompanied by synthesis of the most extensive sort. The development of science in the past three centuries has been diametrically different from the political, literary and artistic development of the same period. In the preceding ages, when everything else was organized and relevant, science was a mere miscellany of disconnected facts.

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With the release of the human mind from authority, science began to be systematic and coherent. Release from established traditions and precedences meant in the world of politics, literature and art, limitless freedom. In science it meant subjugation to experimental verification and the logical consistency of fact with fact. So while the broad visible history of the Age of Democracy so far has been one of release, escape, go-as-you-please, less conspicuous in laboratories and faculties and books and classes—but in the end infinitely more significant—has been the growth of one consistent vision of reality to which all things must be referred, in which the moods of a man are made to march with chemical changes, and the structure of the smallest atom is brought into relation with the physics of the remotest star. To that release of synthetic forces I shall presently return.

Next let me point out that this period of the ascent of Democracy has by no means been a period of easy, undisputed ascent.

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Nor has it been merely a struggle against kings and aristocracies, privileges and advantages, ancient traditions and old authority. The proposition that any man is as important as any man has come hard against certain mental and material realities. History for the last hundred years or so, has been largely the story of that collision. This assertion of human equality has come against the severest stresses at the boundaries where language meets language, and at the geographical or social frontiers of dissimilar races. There the common man, who has been willing to break down all the boundaries between himself and his superiors, discovers deep instinctive dispositions to call a halt and draw the line. His mind is invaded by an exaggerated sense of difference. He develops rivalries, suspicions, antagonism. The Age of Democracy has also been the Age of Nationalism. Never in the whole history of mankind have national and racial antagonisms been so acute and conscious, so massive, powerful and dangerous as they have become during the

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ascent of Democracy. And yet that is entirely inconsistent with the larger and completer aspirations of Democracy, which have insisted always that there shall be no distinctions of class or creed or race. One of the most human and interesting things to watch at the present time is the struggle of the Labour parties in the European democracies against their ingrained nationalist feelings and their belligerent patriotism. And still more edifying are the fluctuations of the Labour movement in such countries as Australia and South Africa with regard to yellow and brown immigration and the black vote.

But nationalism is not the greatest force that Modern Democracy has evoked against itself in its ascent. Far more fundamental is the synthetic drive in economic life, the enormous material pressure making for the replacement of individual and small competitive businesses by great and unifying enterprises, not merely in manufactures but in the production of such staples as coal, oil, iron and steel, cotton, food substances and

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fundamental chemical products. The small man and the medium-sized business are pushed aside by highly organized and often quite scientifically organized concerns.

Here again the paradoxical aspect of Democracy reappears. These great crystallizations of business—so large as to become at last monopolies—are plainly due to the releases of Democracy, the freedom of science, invention, experiment and enterprise, the lack of control and restriction the ascent of Democracy has involved. But just as plainly do these crystallizations run counter to the more intimate feeling of Democracy that every man is as good as every man, that every man should be his own master and live his life in his own fashion after his own heart. Essential to the life and success of these big businesses is an intricate system of specialization and subordination of functions, and great freedoms of action for the executives. Most of those engaged in working them must be simply employed persons, and there must be great inequalities of authority and initiative

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between one man and another. In America a sort of reconciliation between this democratic reality of economic synthesis and democratic ideals of equality has been attempted by Anti-Trust legislation, and in England there is a small but delightfully logical movement for what is called the Distributive State, which is to cut up big businesses periodically and hand the bleeding fragments back to the common man. But the main expression of this conflict between synthesis and analysis in the democratic age has been the struggle for and against Socialism. For there is scarcely any form of Socialism that does not fall within the definition of an attempt to take the general economic life out of whatever hands control it at present and hand it over to the direction either of representatives elected by the workers, or of politicians elected by the voters of the entire community. Socialism is the attempt to democratize economic life as political life has already been democratized. And the final practical objection to Socialism, partial or

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general—the objection that has usually carried the argument—has always been this: that politicians and elected people are not good enough for the job.

That brings me to the great conspicuous fact of our present time, to what I may call the arrest, the pause, in the advance of political Democracy—to the fact that now and since the War, there has been a growing distrust and discontent with the politicians and the political methods evolved by Parliamentary Democracy.

In two great Latin countries we have seen politicians and parliamentary institutions thrust aside with no signs of popular regret. In Russia a parliamentary republic appeared and vanished like a dream and gave place to a government by an organized association of a quite unprecedented pattern, the Communist Party, making only the slightest concessions to the representative idea. In China we see another extraordinary organization, the Kuomintang, consolidating the whole country with tremendous vigour in the face

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of the discredited parliamentarianism of Pekin. I will not discuss nor even raise other instances to enforce my argument that the magic has gone out of the method of government by general elections.

I have said enough, I think, to pose my essential question. Is the process of ascendent Democracy played out? Or is it going on upon the old lines, in spite of these appearances? Or is it perhaps entering upon a new phase; a phase so different as practically to open a new age in the story of human experience? Are not its synthetic releases overtaking and mastering its tendency to fragmentation?

I have already betrayed, even in my title, the answer I am disposed to give to these questions, which is that Democracy is entering upon a phase of revision in which parliaments and parliamentary bodies and political life as we know it to-day are destined to disappear. And that with the disappearance will come profound changes in all our methods of expression, indeed in all our lives.

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For a number of generations the democratic process ruling the world has meant nothing but release, enfranchisement for freedom, the breaking down of controls and restraints and obstacles. There has been a world-wide detachment of individuals from codes and controls, subjugations and responsibilities, functions and duties. I suggest that this process of dissolution is at an end, and that mankind is faced—is challenged—by the need for reorganization and reorientation, political and social and intellectual, quite beyond the power of the negligent common voter and his politicians and the happy-go-lucky education and literature on which our minds are fed.

Let me state three great inter-related problems that have been facing mankind since the War, and let me remind you how futile so far have been the attempts of our modern democratic governments and communities to find solutions, to produce any hope of solutions, for these problems.

Foremost of these three in our conscious-

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ness is the problem of war. I need not, before such an audience as this, dilate upon the cruelty, the horror, the sheer destructiveness into which the war process, equipped by modern science, necessarily develops. I will not talk of air bombardment, nor of poison gas and germs, nor of the practical abolition of the immunity of the non-combatant, nor of the complete economic and social disorganization that would probably ensue upon another group of wars. I take it that upon these matters you are of the same mind as myself. I take it that an enormous majority of humanity now wants no more war.

Yet consider how feeble have been the efforts of any government since 1918 to set up more than the flimsiest paper barriers against war. The sabres still rattle in Europe. The big guns are moved from position to position. In 1910 war hung over Europe, over the world, like a cliff we knew must fall. And it fell. Here and now, are we any safer? For what were these politicians elected? Little conferences, little

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junketings, little demonstrations of amiability —like tying back the cliff with coloured cotton. Meanwhile the foundries go on making tanks, battleships, guns, all the world over.

And second of these three problems Modern Democracy has no power to handle, is the monetary question. If anything is plain, if there is anything upon which everyone must be agreed, it is that for the proper working of contemporary civilization, a stable money basis of world-wide validity is essential. Just so far as money is unstable, so far does speculation undermine and replace sound business enterprise and honest work for profit. For eight years now we have seen the exchanges of the world dance together. We have seen the effort for economic recuperation crippled and deflected by this drunkard dance of money. Each democratic government has pursued its own policy according to its lights and apparent interests. The bankers and the financiers have performed their mysterious operations in obscurity. And nowhere, in any

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Democracy, has the mass of voters shown the slightest understanding of or ability to grasp the processes which threw them out of employment, made their poor savings evaporate, and snatched the necessities of life out of their reach.

But the military obsession with its war threat and the monetary tangle are, so to speak, merely complications of the more general riddle before mankind, which is that, chiefly through changes in methods of transport and the advance of science and invention, economic life has become world-wide and a certain economic unity is being imposed willy-nilly upon the globe. A vast change of scale is happening in economic life—a vast extension of range. So that the method of the small individual manufacturer and trader, the method even of the moderate-sized competing company, the method even of national groups, tend to be superseded, in the case of all our staple supplies, by combinations upon a universal scale. The master problem before us all, before our race, is how to achieve

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this world economic unity, how to produce a system of world controls with as little blind experiment as possible, without the sacrifice of countless millions, of whole generations, in the throes of this inevitable reconstruction. How to establish enough political unity in the world to ensure peace; how to establish enough political unity to save industry and trade from becoming the mere preliminaries to a gamble with the exchange; how to establish enough political unity to control and direct the distribution of raw products, employment and manufactured goods about the earth—that in brief is the present task before the human intelligence. And we have no governments, we have nothing in the world able to deal with this trinity of problems, this three-headed Sphinx which has waylaid and now confronts mankind.

Now the sense of the inadequacy of modern democratic governments for the task before them grows upon us all. What is going to be attempted, what is going to be done in the matter? We are all familiar nowa-

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days with various projects of electoral reform. Some, such as the Referendum, aim merely at restraining and paralyzing governments. Others, such as the proposal to have smaller representative bodies of members elected by large constituencies by the methods of proportional representation by the simple transferable vote, would no doubt give a more free and vigorous assembly, and go far to abolish political parties and the hack professional politician. But none of these electoral reform projects go to the root of the trouble with Modern Democracy, which is the indifference, ignorance and incapacity of the common man towards public affairs.

We have to recognize more plainly than is generally admitted to-day, that the ordinary voter does not care a rap for his vote. He does not connect it with the idea of the world at large, nor use it to express any will or purpose whatever about the general conduct of things. I have already called attention to the fact that the novel, the characteristic literary form of Modern Democracy, and the

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modern drama ignore all comprehensive political and religious ideas. Thereby they display current reality with the utmost veracity. These forms, the novel and the play, have so far embodied no new concepts and directions about life as a whole, they have simply presented life at large released from pre-existing concepts and directions. Our modern democratic governments reveal as clearly that the onset of Modern Democracy did not mean a transfer of power from the few to the many, but a disappearance of power from the world. The vote is an instrument of defence, and not a constructive tool. Faced with gigantic constructive needs of ever-increasing urgency, political Democracy fails. It cannot produce inventive and original governments; it cannot produce resolute governments; it cannot produce understanding, far-thinking governments. Its utmost act of will is the capricious or peevish dismissal of governments by a general election.

For a century or more it has worked well that the world should be under-governed and

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under-organized. In that liberty science has won its way, established itself in a world-wide system of research and record, gained an invincible inertia. Music has achieved the most glorious developments, painting risen to unprecedented levels of technique, literature learnt a new fearlessness, and industry and commerce have tried and expanded a thousand subtle and huge combinations no official control would ever have permitted. The mere break-down of the cramping systems of the past, the escape from traditional privilege and authority, was enough to permit the great expansion of life that has gone on since the sixteenth century. But there is a limit to unguided and uncontrolled expansion, and at that limit we seem to have arrived with a war threat, a monetary instability and a chronic conflict between the organic growth of economic processes and the desire of the worker for freedom and happiness, which none of the governments in the world seem to have the necessary initiative and vigour to meet.

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We need now more definite direction and government in human affairs, on a scale and of a quality commensurate with the three mighty problems our race has to face. It is idle to talk of returning to the little royalties, aristocracies and so forth of the pre-democratic past. Are there any signs of a new, more decisive and more vigorously constructive form of government in our world? I submit there are, and on these signs I rest my anticipations of the Age of Democracy under Revision that is dawning upon us. Coming events cast their shadows before, and a keen eye can detect a number of shadows of what is coming. But the two shadows to which I would particularly draw your attention are the Communist Party and Fascism.

Let me be perfectly clear upon one point here. I am an unsparing hostile critic of Marxist Communism. I have a strong dislike for many aspects of Fascism—including particularly its head. May I insist upon that? There is a mental disease about called ‘ Seeing

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red,' and I want to avoid any manifestations of that to-night. I am not sympathetic with communist ideas. In my latest book, *The World of William Clissold*, you will find a most careful, elaborate and destructive criticism of Marxism, and my treatment of Lenin has brought down upon me the violent vituperation of Mr. Trotsky. Quite as fervently have I plunged into conflict with Fascism. I am anti-communist and anti-fascist. But what I am discussing now is not the mental content of these two movements, but their quality and spirit as organizations.

Their quality and spirit as organizations. . . . They are both mainly composed of youngish people. They are so far democratic that they are open to anyone who will obey their disciplines and satisfy their requirements. Some of my hearers may know something of the intimate lives of young Communists or young Fascists. The movement dominates the entire life. The individual gives himself—or herself—to the movement in a spirit essentially religious.

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It enters into the life and into the conscience as few religions do nowadays. Communism indeed claims that it is a complete substitute for religion. Everything else is to be subordinated to the ends of the movement. With the Fascist there is the supposed good of the Italian community; with the Communist it is the supposed good of the whole world. These movements began as voluntary movements of young people, so concerned about public affairs as willingly to give themselves to the sacrifices and dangers—and adventure—involved. I submit it is a fact of profound significance that Fascism could attract enough vigorous young people to capture and hold and govern Italy, and that the Communist Party, with perhaps a hundred thousand members or so in Russia, could seize upon the ruins of that war-broken land and hold it against all comers.

One has to admit, in spite of many assertions to the contrary, that neither in Italy nor Russia do the masses of the population seem to resent the dictatorship of these asso-

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ciations. No vote famine has broken out in these disenfranchized countries. You do not find haggard peasants wandering about in search of a polling booth. So that our assertion that the average common man, the common voter, does not care a rap about the commonweal and his vote, has to be supplemented by the fact that there is an active-minded minority capable of so vivid an interest in the direction of public affairs as to make the most complete sacrifices to see things going in the way it considers right. This is most conspicuous in Russia and Italy, but in China students' associations, closely similar in character, are taking possession of the larger half of the country, and in Japan and many other countries kindred bodies of mentally energetic types are playing an increasingly important rôle in public life. In the nineteenth century such types were either not stimulated to activity, or their energies were spent upon parliamentary politics or diverted in other directions. Now all over the world a certain section of them is taking

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its activities out of parliamentary affairs and setting itself into vigorous competition with the parliamentary system.

You see I am building my expectation of a new phase in human affairs upon the belief that there is a profoundly serious minority in the mass of our generally indifferent species. I cannot understand the existence of any of the great religions, I cannot explain any fine and grave constructive process in history, unless there is such a serious minority amidst our confusions. They are the salt of the earth, these people capable of devotion and of living lives for remote and mighty ends—and, unless the composition of our species has altered, they are as numerous as they have ever been. I see them less and less satisfied and used by existing loyalties and traditional faiths. I see them ready to crystallize about any constructive idea powerful enough to grip their minds. Is it not reasonable then to hold that these associations, these concentrations of mentally energetic types for political ends, these revelations of politico-

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religious fervour in the community—considerable as they are even now—are the mere beginnings of much greater things? The breakdown of the old loyalties and the old faiths in the past age has released this great fund of effort and synthetic possibility for new applications. And over against it we have the need for world peace—which can be achieved only by some sort of political unity—and for social adjustment, which seems only possible through the comprehensible handling of world economic affairs as one great system.

More than twenty years ago, in a book called *A Modern Utopia*, when there was not a fact on earth to support me, I sketched a World State ruled by a self-devoted organization of volunteers. To-day, I can recall that conception of a future society and I can appeal to Russia, China, Italy and much that is astir everywhere, to substantiate that possibility. I have spoken of the youth in these two specimen movements I have cited, but it is not merely the young who will be

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found willing to orient their dispersed lives to great aims and comprehensive ideas. The pain of aimlessness and ineffectiveness can be aroused at any age with the realization of insecurity. The search for a consuming objective ends only with life. In short, we have the morally energetic types needed for such a movement in a released and nascent state. We have the manifest need for such a movement. We are gathering the creative ideas and accumulating the impulse for such a movement. What is there to prevent a great politico-religious drive for social and world unity taking hold everywhere of the active and adventurous minority of mankind—that is to say, of all mankind that matters—even quite soon?

That is the essence of what I want to put before you to-night. That is what I mean when I say that the phase of Democracy as release has come to its end, and that we are already in the beginning of the phase of Democratic Synthesis, a great religious-spirited phase. If you choose to link it to

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Christianity or Islam or Buddhism or any existing democratic religion; or with Communism, that religious substitute; or call it in itself the Religion of Progress, nothing that I am saying here to-night will stand in your way. And if this diagnosis is correct, then necessarily the changing spirit of Democracy, the change from fragmentation and irrelevance to synthesis and reference to directive general ideas on a universal scale, will become apparent in all forms of human expression.

Here with the time at my disposal I can but ask: Is that so? In political life, is there any tendency among intelligent people to be dissatisfied with the passive rôle of voters and to attempt, in all sorts of ways, to exert a direct influence on common affairs? In intellectual life, is there an increasing tendency to discuss world-wide problems—political, economic, social? Is there a marked increase of such literature? A livelier interest in such questions? If this thesis is right, the novel and the drama should be changing. They should both be bringing in great issues,

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a quasi-religious attitude to world affairs as a living part of the human story. The novel should no longer be merely a picture of a spectacle relying for its interest upon adventures and the extraordinary traits of individual characters, in no way responsible for the whole. It should be turning decisively towards responsibility, to what I might call creative propaganda. It should be permeated by the question: 'What do these lives make for?' And the drama—to turn to the drama—should be no longer the well-made play grouping itself around a situation. Is such a play as Shaw's *Saint Joan*, or Toller's *Masses and Men*, any intimation of Synthetic Democracy upon the stage? Again, is there in painting and music any tendency to return from—what shall I say?—pure painting and pure music to breadth and profundity of reference?

Well, I ask these questions. I put these ideas before you. I have done my best to give you my impression of this new phase into which human life is passing, and my

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forecast of the new spirit that I believe will guide the criticism of expression in the time before us. And I thank you with all my heart for the reception and the attention you have given me.